

SEP 08 2000

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

#BXNFMXY
#000029108313#
SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
901 COMMERCE ST STE 401
NASHVILLE TN 37203-3620

SINCE 1877

31, 2000

VOL. 124

No. 29

Revivals reach out to Hispanic community

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

S.A. "Sonny" Adkins is on a mission. The energetic director of the evangelism department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board has identified one of the largest unsaved groups in Mississippi, and he's going after them in the name of Jesus Christ.

Adkins believes that the thousands of Hispanic workers flooding into Mississippi at a record pace are providing Mississippi Baptists with an unprecedented opportunity to share the Gospel in the state's Hispanic community and beyond.

"God just laid it on my heart that we've got to do something to evangelize the

Hispanic community in Mississippi. The idea came to me to have Hispanic-led revivals in areas of the state with large concentrations of Hispanic workers.

"I called my old friend, evangelist

Homer Martinez, in Dallas and asked him if he thought such an idea was feasible. He immediately said, "Yes," Adkins recalled.

What eventually sprang from that early concept was a two-week-long, traveling series of revivals in northeast Mississippi, with Martinez preaching and music evangelist Pablo Hinojos of Dallas serving as worship leader.

Among the locations where revival services were held:

- Vardaman — Meeting August 13-14 in a

storefront on Main Street, eight professions of faith were made and one Bible study was started. Total attendance was 73 people.

The Hispanic work is sponsored by Calhoun and Chickasaw Associations.

- Pontotoc — A total of 219 people attended services at the county associational office, and eleven professions of faith were made.

"There are 300-plus Hispanics in the Pontotoc area, representing about 75 families. The Pontotoc ministry is the strongest at this time," Adkins said.

The Hispanic work is sponsored by West Heights Church, Pontotoc.

- Ripley — A storefront just off the downtown square was the meeting place for August 18-20 services, where 120 people attended and 10 professions of faith were made. A festival at the Fairgrounds drew 54 people.

The Hispanic work is sponsored by Benton/Tippah Association.

- Tupelo — Bethany Church was the site of August 20-23 services. A total of 165 people attended, and eight professions of faith were made.

The Hispanic work is sponsored by Lee Association.

- Corinth — More than 150 people were present for August 24-27 services at Oakland Church. Twelve professions of faith were made. A festival at the Sportsplex drew another 127 people.

The Hispanic work is sponsored by

Oakland Church and Alcorn Association.

During the Vardaman revival, Adkins, Martinez, and others visited Hispanic workers in the afternoon and invited them to the nightly services. Eight professions of faith resulted.

"The interesting thing was that most of the professions were adult males. I started to wonder why that was and then it hit me — most of their wives and families were home in Mexico while their husbands and fathers were in this country trying to earn a living. Many, many Hispanic families are separated," Adkins said.

The Hispanic work in Pontotoc has grown so rapidly that the associational office has become crowded and a larger place to worship will soon have to be found, Adkins pointed out.

"We had an interesting experience in Corinth. No one came the first night, so we just had a prayer meeting among ourselves.

"The next evening, 23 people showed up and there were six professions of faith — more than 25% of the people who came that second night were saved, and six additional people were saved later on," Adkins said.

Martinez was also invited to preach at the Sunday worship services of Oakland Church, where two non-Hispanics made professions of faith, Adkins recalled.

"That was a significant event, inviting Homer to preach from the pulpit of a predominantly non-Hispanic church. It was very moving," he said.

Adkins pointed out that identifying and training Hispanic pastors is a crucial part of the effort to evangelize the growing Hispanic community in Mississippi, and believers must also be available for discipling the new Christians.

If Adkins has his way, the Hispanic revivals will become an annual Mississippi Baptist event.

"We didn't have a past event by which to gauge this event, but I can tell you that I am pleased. I think it was very successful; if only one person had come to know Christ, it would have been worth the effort," he said.

Adkins said most of the Hispanics living in the areas of the revivals are involved in agricultural work, and he plans to target the large numbers of Hispanics working in the Mississippi poultry and furniture manufacturing business.

"They are here among us, and we must address their spiritual needs. That's a command directly from Jesus," he said.

The Hispanic revivals were supported by the Cooperative Program. For more information, contact Adkins at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3279 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 279. E-mail: adkins@mbcb.org.



PRaising THE LORD — Hispanic worshipers gather in the Pontotoc Association building in Pontotoc for one of the Hispanic-led revival services. (Photo by S.A. "Sonny" Adkins)



WORD OF HOPE — Dallas evangelist Homer Martinez speaks to a gathering of Hispanics at the Corinth Sportsplex during a stop on what is believed to be the first-ever Hispanic revival campaign in Mississippi. Corinth was one of five locations selected for the revivals. (Photo by S.A. "Sonny" Adkins)

South Miss. Evangelism Conf. set for Sept. 11-12

The South Mississippi Evangelism Conference, featuring the president and first vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), will be held September 11-12 at First Church, Gulfport.

Jim Merritt, first-term SBC president and pastor of First Church, Snellville, Ga., will speak at the 6:30 p.m. evening session on September 11. Merritt is a former pastor of Highland Church in Laurel.

Also speaking at the September 11

evening session will be Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson.

In addition, a Youth Evangelism rally will begin at 6:30 p.m. on the evening of September 11 at B. Frank Brown Gym in Gulfport. Jim Shaddix of New Orleans will speak and Chris Layton of Hattiesburg will lead music.

Ted Traylor, SBC first vice-president and pastor of Olive Church in Pensacola, Fla., will speak at the 6:30 p.m. evening session on September 12.

Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Seminary, will also speak at

the September 12 evening session.

A senior adult rally and luncheon will be held at 11 a.m. on September 12, with MBCB evangelism director S.A. "Sonny" Adkins serving as speaker.

Jerry Watts, pastor of Bay Vista Church in Biloxi, will lead the music.

The conference is open to the public; there are no registration or fees. For more information, contact First Church, Gulfport, at (228) 863-8501.



Merritt



Futral

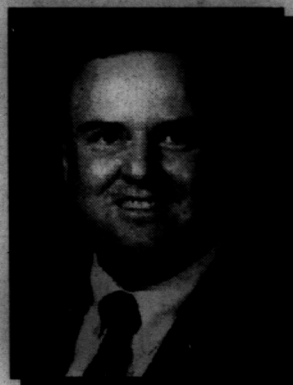
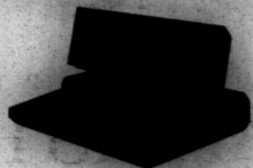


Traylor



Kelley

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**Postmaster: Send changes of address
to The BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box
530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Send
news, communication, and address
changes to The Editor, BAPTIST
RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS
39205-0530 (601) 968-3800
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VOLUME 124 NUMBER 29
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4
and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist
Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street,
Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per
year payable in advance. Economy plans
available for cooperating Mississippi
churches. Periodicals postage paid at
Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State
Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items —
one calendar week prior to requested pub-
lication date. Advertising — two calendar
weeks prior to requested publication date.

A lost and perverted world

The Olympic Games, scheduled to open in a few weeks in Sydney, Australia, will apparently add a new twist this time around to the venerable institution that began in Greece thousands of years ago.

The closing ceremonies of the Sydney games will feature a parade that officially includes cross-dressing men as representatives of Australian culture, according to CNSNews.com, an Internet news site, as reported by Baptist Press.

There are probably more than a few Baptists who have heard of cross-dressing, but for the benefit of those of us who haven't run across this perverse phenomenon of human nature, here's a brief explanation: cross-dressing is a euphemistic title for men who get a thrill from dressing in women's attire and passing themselves off as females.

Such behavior is not new as far as the history of the world (or New Orleans) is concerned, but what is new about it is the growing social acceptance of cross-dressing as a legitimate expression of one's sexual identity in liberal democracies such as Australia, England, and the U.S.

Cross-dressing is not the only sexual aberration some old-fashioned folks might regard as sin that has been cleaned up and legitimized in today's world of "anything goes."

According to the CNSNews.com/Baptist Press report, Sydney boasts a large and politically-powerful homosexual community, and the city annually hosts what is billed as a gay and lesbian Mardi Gras that draws one million celebrants.

Most Australian church groups and conservative politicians have denounced the inclusion of the self-described "drag queens" in the closing ceremony, but their protests have fallen on deaf ears.

Christian Democratic Party leader Fred Nile said the "public homosexual display (would) embarrass many Australians by giving the impression that Australia is the homosexual capital of the world."

A Catholic Church spokesman said, "I don't think it would reflect any credit on the culture of the country."

Even a Muslim community representative has condemned the cross-dressers and their planned float as the wrong message for Australia to send to the world.

The responses from the Olympic planning committee and Sydney city leaders to the concerns of the religious community have been underwhelming.

Sydney Mayor Frank Sartor said the "diversity and quality" of such entertainment would "become the new standard for host cities of the Olympic Games."

Event director Ric Birch simply repeated the homosexual movement's mantra that any criticism of the cross-dressers was stirred up by "right wing reactionaries."

Anglican Archbishop Henry Goodhew issued the most salient comment on the controversy, however.

"It is very revealing that Christians can be restricted from wearing even a T-shirt with a Gospel theme on Olympic sites, while something that represents a standard of confused sexuality can get such prominent exhibition," the Sydney Herald newspaper quoted the archbishop as saying.

In addition, the CNSNews.com/Baptist Press article reported that an Australian Christian interdenominational group had been rebuffed by Olympic officials in their quest to have a prayer included in the open-

Season of Prayer begins

A first-of-its-kind video (dream scene, above) and special pull-out section in this issue of The Baptist Record mark the beginning of the Season of Prayer for State Missions and an emphasis on the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering. The video and other emphasis materials are available from the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. E-mail: dsills@mbcb.org.

ing ceremony of the games.

So there you have it. In our modern, enlightened world, Christians cannot wear even a simple T-shirt that describes their lifestyle, while sexual deviants can wear whatever they please and parade their newly-legitimized lifestyle before world-wide television cameras.

Sort of makes you want to go out and witness to a lost and perverted world before it's too late, doesn't it?

It certainly should.

On a late November afternoon, our Mississippi Baptist disaster response team walked across a mountain valley in Honduras. All around us was the evidence of the devastation of a recent hurricane and flood. Near a small church — one of the few buildings that had survived — we talked with a young pastor. He had a story to tell and was anxious to tell it.

We knew it had rained a lot, but no one could have ever guessed that in 12 hours we had over 36 inches of rain in the mountains above us. The water around us began to rise quickly. My only thought was how I could save my family. By the time I gathered my three boys, the water was around our house. I placed one son on my shoulders and gathered the other two in my arms. We started to higher ground, but immediately as I stepped from our house the water lapped at my knees. With each step the water continued to rise. Soon the water was at my waist and then my chest. I began to believe we would all die in the swirling water. At the last moment, as we were going under, someone cast us a rope. That rope and the man who held it became our way to safety. Without his effort, none of us would be here today.

GUEST OPINION:



A rope of hope

By Jim Didlake, director
Men's Ministry Department
Miss. Baptist Convention Board

One could see the thankfulness in his eyes for God's caring and a friend's love. As I listened, I realized he was telling his story to craft a picture of what you, Mississippi Baptists, do on a regular basis through the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Ministry. Instead of a literal rope, Mississippi Baptists donate food, clothes, and materials to cast a rope of hope for the victims of the hurricane and flood.

The rope that you threw to the people of Honduras has an eternal plan. With each box of food or clothing, and with each construction crew to help rebuild housing, the message of Christ goes through us to people in need. Already, 26 missions are underway across Honduras

as a result of the Mississippi Baptist disaster response.

As I stood there with the young pastor and considered all that was taking place around us, I thought of how you make such stories possible through our disaster response ministry possible.

In 1979, Mississippi Baptists began their disaster relief ministry. In the years since then, disaster response teams have traveled from the East Coast to the West Coast of this country, as well as to international disaster spots like Honduras and Haiti. This has been possible only because of funding from the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering (MLSMO).

Through the Mississippi Baptist disaster response to the Mexican earthquake of 1985, you had a part in reopening that

country to missions before it ever closed. Missionaries had been notified they would have to leave the country within three months, but after the disaster response of Mississippi Baptists and other Southern Baptist Convention states, Mexican authorities have allowed the missionaries to continue their work.

In 1992 when a devastating series of tornadoes ripped through Rankin County and several other areas of our state, the governor reported publicly that Mississippi Baptists were first on the scene, aiding victims through the disaster response ministry.

Stories like these will continue to be told and people will come to know Christ, because your help and love have been present in the worst of times through the disaster response ministry. Whether a cup of cold water or a plate of hot food, the hand of every Mississippi Baptist is present through gifts to MLSMO.

This year's MLSMO sets aside \$50,000 for the disaster response ministry. My prayer is that Mississippi Baptists will always have this vision to change our world, beginning with the outreach provided by sacrificial giving to our state missions effort.

Green light for embryo cell research decried

WASHINGTON (BP) — The federal government released final guidelines Aug. 23 permitting taxpayer funding of research on cells from human embryos, amid a chorus of criticism from pro-life advocates.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) rules, which have been expected since they were issued in draft form in December, will allow federal funds to be used for the study of stem cells from early human embryos but not for the actual act of deriving the stem cells, which requires the destruction of the embryos. The extraction of the cells would have to be privately funded.

Stem cells are primitive cells from which a wide variety of tissue in the human body develops, providing hope for producing cells and tissues to use as replacements in treating a variety of conditions, including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, and diabetes. The announcement of the first isolation of stem cells came in November 1998.

Pro-life lawmakers and ethicists decried the guidelines. The regulations not only violate the sanctity of human life, but they breach federal law and appear to be presumptive when stem cells derived from other sources have shown promise, pro-lifers said.

"Embryonic stem-cell research is illegal, immoral, and unnecessary," said Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., in a written statement.

NIH "is violating both the spirit and letter of the law," Brownback said in reference to a 1996 act prohibiting federal support for "research in which a human embryo or embryos are destroyed."

"If we manage the cure of

some diseases and the betterment of some aspects of bodily health by means that involve the killing of the most defenseless and innocent of human beings, we will rightfully be judged harshly by history as



having sought some benefits at the expense of our humanity and moral being," Brownback said.

Ben Mitchell, a Southern Baptist bioethicist, said he is grateful the guidelines forbid "the use of tax dollars to destroy embryos" but "profound problems" remain.

"First, the wall of separation is highly permeable," said Mitchell, a consultant with the Southern Baptist (SBC) Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). "NIH has tried to create a firewall between the act of destroying the embryo and the use of the stem cells in research. Tax-funded researchers will be standing with outstretched hand ready to receive the cells of

destroyed embryos. The moral guilt for killing the embryo passes from one hand to the other. Whether NIH will admit it or not, researchers who use stem cells from destroyed embryos are morally complicit in the destruction of those embryos. After all, they are providing a market or use for those embryos.

"Second, the guidelines are premature. There is growing evidence that human embryonic stem cells are not necessary for the progress of science or for potential therapies. Every day more data are released showing that other sources of stem cells hold great promise and do not require the destruction of the embryo or fetus.

"Third, the NIH's argument is flawed," said Mitchell, associate professor of bioethics and contemporary culture at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill. "Human embryos, even at the earliest stages, are fully human. They would develop into fully formed infants if nurtured for nine months. We were all embryos at one time. Moreover, we have a responsibility not to harm other human beings, no matter how young.

"Finally, the fact that these embryos are so-called spare embryos who would be discarded does not, therefore, entail a right for anyone to harvest their life-sustaining parts. Death-row prisoners are going to die anyway. That does not mean that we should be permitted to harvest their life-sustaining organs."

Douglas Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, said in a written release, "If a law said that no federal funds may support 'research in which porpoises are destroyed' and a federal agency then told its grantees to arrange for porpoises to be caught and killed for use in federally approved experiments, everyone would recognize this as illegal."

Studies have demonstrated stem cells from such sources as adult bone marrow can be used to produce tissue that would not be tainted by the destruction of human life.

Congress and this year's presidential candidates may be prepared to clash over the guidelines. Congressional proponents of the 1996 ban on embryo research are likely to try to block NIH. Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic presidential nominee, and Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the Republican candidate, are on opposite sides of the issue.

"The governor opposes federal funding for stem-cell research that involves destroying a living human embryo," a Bush campaign spokesman told The Washington Post. If elected, Bush could halt such research by executive order.

Record

MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

AUGUST 31, 2000

VOL. 124

No. 29

YouthLink results announced

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — YouthLink 2000, a Southern Baptist-sponsored millennial celebration for youth at the end of December 1999, resulted in more than 15,000 public decisions for Christian service and reached 46,081 young people at a total investment of \$9.3 million, final figures show.

Financial accounting on the seven-city event was completed in early August, indicating participant registrations accounted for \$2.7 million of that investment, with the balance of \$6.6 million invested by denominational sponsors. LifeWay Christian Resources provided 43.89%; the International Mission Board, 37.85%; the North American Mission Board, 15.52%; and Woman's Missionary Union, 2.74%.

The Dec. 29-31, 1999, event involved young people meeting in arenas and conference centers to worship and listen to speakers and musical groups emphasizing the need to reach the world with the gospel. They also participated in hands-on mission activities.

Gatherings in Anaheim, Calif.; Atlanta; Denver; Houston; Philadelphia; St. Louis, Mo.; and Tampa, Fla., were linked by satellite for special features. Live satellite feeds from the Holy Land were included several times during the conference.

A total of 9,131 students made decisions saying that they were willing to be a missionary if God called them, and 4,985 said that they felt God was calling them into full-time Christian ministry.

In addition, more than 4,000 promised they would spend a summer, semester, or year doing God's work full time.

Looking back

10 years ago

Trustees of Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson vote to make the hospital complex smoke-free, including the grounds as well as all MBMC-owned vehicles and other equipment. The new policy "enhances the well-being of our patients and employees," says executive director Kent Strum.

20 years ago

Four Mississippi Baptist men depart for the Caribbean to assist Barbados Baptist College after Hurricane Allen ripped through the island and devastated the college. The four men are Hoyt Johnson and Aubrey Dodson of Holly Springs; and Joe Dickerson and Arthur Bennett of Lucedale.

50 years ago

Samuel B. Culpepper, founder and first president of Baptist-affiliated Clarke Memorial College in Newton, dies at age 74 at his home in Cleburne, Texas, where he had lived for the past 22 years. The former Mississippi pastor also served for years as chaplain for the Texas State Senate.

Last call for golf benefit

Last call has been issued for golfers interested in participating in the annual Retired Ministers Benefit Golf Tournament at Bay Pointe Country Club in Rankin County. The tourney benefits needy retired Southern Baptist ministers, missionaries, and their widows who live in Mississippi. Cost is \$65 per player or \$60 each for a four-man team, and includes green fees, lunch, and beverages. For more information or to register for the tournament, contact Richard or Michelle Winkler at (601) 346-0027.

Indonesia video now on IMB website

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Video and audio reports on the persecution of Christians on Indonesia's Ambon island are now on the news page of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) Internet site, <http://www.imb.org/front-page.htm>.

The video segment was drawn from tape of a refugee camp and burned-out churches and homes that Stephens and his crew videotaped during their visit.

The audio segment is a brief reflection by Drew Stephens, a Southern Baptist who recently returned from Ambon, on what it was like to worship with Ambonese Christians near the front lines of the "jihad" attacks on Christian settlements.

As many as 500,000 Christians have been driven from their homes on Ambon and more than 2,500 have been killed by Muslim "jihad" warriors who have publicly declared they will push all Christians off the island or kill them.

The fighting has forced aid organizations to leave, and food, clothing, and medical care are in short supply. Christian leaders in Ambon have said they feel the world is ignoring the crisis.

Relief agencies' work resuming in Sudan

WASHINGTON (BP) — United Nations (U.N.) relief flights are again taking food and medicine into Sudan — but there is no long-term relief in sight for the nation's suffering people.

Attacks had forced relief agencies to cancel missions of mercy into the country for more than a week, according to various news sources cited by Crosswalk.com, an Internet news and information site. There have been at least 33 bombing attacks against relief sites in south and central Sudan since July, the Associated Press reported.

Relief flights resumed during the week of Aug. 14 after the United Nations agreed to clear them with the government 14 days before their arrival, according to the U.S.-based group World Relief. Areas where World Relief is working were bombed, however, during the week of Aug. 21, according to the ministry.

Sudanese planes also have bombed areas where Samaritan's Purse is at work, Crosswalk.com reported, and sites run by the U.N. World Food Programme, Doctors Without Borders, and the Red Cross also have been bombed. The groups feed and provide medical care to refugees of Sudan's 17-year civil war.

The attacks are not directed at rebel forces but are attempts to intimidate the relief

agencies into abandoning the people of southern Sudan, said Elijah Malok of the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, a group affiliated with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The SPLA is waging a defensive war to keep Khartoum's Islamic troops from taking over the south.

The bombing of innocent civilians and relief work is a callous and inhumane act," World Relief's Clive Calver said. "The Khartoum government must stand indicted of recklessly playing with the lives of tens of thousands of people who, without food and medical supplies, face imminent death."

Khartoum has tried to forcibly Islamicize the Christian and animist south since 1983, according to Maryland-based International Christian Concern (ICC). Sudanese government troops have carried out mass attacks on civilians in the past decade, killing men and taking women and children into slavery. Churches have been destroyed and pastors killed, ICC reported.

An estimated two million people have died in the war and from a government-induced famine. Nearly five million are displaced from their homes and living in refugee camps, according to ICC.

Some Christians flee north to Khartoum, where there is some religious freedom. The Roman Catholic Church and eight

Protestant denominations are established in the capital city. Christians are tolerated there because they are considered loyal to the government — and are expected to be converted in time, a Sudanese pastor said.

Muslim leaders in Khartoum use the law rather than lethal force to Islamicize Christians. A recent decree orders schools to teach students the tenets of Islam, regardless of their faith, ICC reported. Schools, including those run by Christians, must adopt the new curriculum or close.

Christians in the north also suffer persecution. Evangelism among Muslims is discouraged and churches are routinely closed, ICC said. Properties belonging to Christians often are confiscated; one building belonging to a Catholic group was taken away and turned into a mosque.

Sudan's church leaders are "crying out to God for their impoverished and spiritually hungry people," according to ICC. "They are pleading with God to end the injustice and suffering."

Christians in the United States are praying for Sudan through Sept. 14. The National Black Catholic Clergy initiated a 40-day time of prayer for Sudan Aug. 6. Franciscan priest James Goode heads the group and will address a gathering at the U.N. Sept. 9.

Gospel reaching world's largest nomadic group

DAKAR, Senegal (BP) — God is using Gospel audio tapes to touch hearts with his love in parts of West Africa with little or no access to Christian witness.

The "Laawol Peewal" (Righteous Way) cassette series in the Pulaar language continues to be a vital tool for reaching the Fulbe Jeeri, the largest nomadic group in the world, say missionaries seeking ways to share the good news of God's love with members of the unreached people group.

More than 95% of the Fulbe Jeeri cannot read, so missionaries Ken and Donna Hills are distributing cassette tapes with the gospel in Pulaar, the Fulbe Jeeri language.

Not only is this method effective in sharing the gospel with those who can't read, it also is an efficient means of spreading God's Word because tapes can go where missionaries can't, the Hills say.

Nearly 400,000 Fulbe Jeeri live in West Africa and few of them know Christ. Islam is the predominant religion, though most Fulbe Jeeri practice folk Islam, a combination of orthodox Islam and ancient animistic beliefs and practices.

An open commitment to Christ as Lord often results in persecution.

Nevertheless, missionaries continue to hear of Fulbe Jeeri in new areas who are interested in knowing more about the gospel. Even with their traditional beliefs, many are captivated by the truth they hear and are ready to hear more, the Hills report.

Most recently, they learned of Fulbe Jeeri in Mali who are listening to "Laawol Peewal" cassettes that have made their way there.

The Hills have worked to get the Old Testament on cassette, despite many obstacles.

In a non-literate society, "it is challenging to find someone who can read, is a believer, has time for the project, and has a mature sounding voice," Donna Hills said, "but in spite of these difficulties, the Lord is getting this project accomplished."

The Hills first planned to use a more traditional approach to sharing the Gospel, but when Ken received a request from a

village chief for some cassette tapes, he knew the door was opening for a different kind of ministry.

Several groups with nearly 100 people gather in villages to listen to one cassette tape.

"The success of the tapes has been phenomenal. The people are thrilled to hear something in their own language. They tell us things like, 'When we are herding our cattle the stories come back to our hearts and speak to us,'" Donna Hills said.

The Hills are working on an audio version of the Jesus film because in their area few people have electricity or televisions.

Cassettes are much more efficient, and they don't need missionaries to play them.

They are also planning to develop cassettes of discipleship studies, leadership training materials and topical Bible studies for the Fulbe Jeeri who are eager to listen, learn, and believe.

Mississippians minister in Wales



At a Baptist church in Llanelli, Wales, four Southern Baptist students lead children in a song, complete with gestures. From the left are Sarah Gannon, a member of Crossgates Church, Brandon; David Huey, a member of First Church, Jackson, Tenn.; Jason Goolsby, a member of Harmony Church, Crystal Springs; and Amanda Marsh, a member of Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth. The four have served almost two months in more than half a dozen cities and towns, and are among 27 Southern Baptist students serving across Wales this summer. (IMB photo by Mike Creswell)

'We Still Pray' movement picking up speed

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP) — Gridlock struck Asheville, N.C., when thousands gathered for a "We Still Pray" rally — and thousands more were stuck in traffic trying to reach the high school football stadium.

As many as 35,000 people, by one newspaper's estimate, either at the Aug. 17 rally or stuck on local highways, registered their protest of a key U.S. Supreme Court ruling against school prayer in June.

One of the national goals of their fledgling "We Still Pray" movement is to encourage "spontaneous prayer" at high school football games — by joining in the Lord's Prayer immediately after the National Anthem.

"This is not in defiance of the Supreme Court ruling," Wendell Runion, one of the interdenominational rally's organizers and owner of Christian radio station WKJV, told the Asheville Citizen-Times. "If the fans break out in a spontaneous prayer, there is no Supreme Court ruling against that."

The "We Still Pray" rally registered "an enormous turnout," a North Carolina State Highway Patrol officer in Asheville told Baptist Press.

"We had no idea that so many people would turn out," said Ralph Sexton, a rally organizer and pastor of an independent Baptist congregation in Asheville, Trinity Church.

The rally was scheduled with a couple weeks' notice and little publicity, the weekly Asheville Tribune reported, noting that every roadway leading to the Reynolds High School football stadium was blocked

for hours — and dotted by impromptu worship services and prayer vigils.

The Supreme Court decision at issue: a 6-3 ruling June 19 declaring unconstitutional a school district policy permitting public prayer before football games. The Galveston County, Texas, school policy permitted the high school student body to determine if it wanted a student to speak over the public address system before football games. If so, the students elected the speaker, who determined whether he would pray or give some other message.

Sexton was quoted by the Asheville Tribune as saying, "We have seen the steady erosion of [religious] rights in this country and it was time to let people know ... we still pray."

Speakers at the Asheville rally included Sexton and Runion, U.S. Rep. Charles Taylor, pastor James Walker of Biltmore Baptist Church, constitutional legal expert David Gibb, and Donnie Parks, chief of police for nearby Hendersonville and a member of Asheville's Bent Creek Church.

Parks, voicing a prayer during the rally, said, "Father, we thank you for our community. Help us to say that we can no longer be silent, as some try to take away this right to pray. But Father, it's our silence, our sleepiness, that has led us into this situation. Help us to see and cause others to see, Father, that there can no longer be silence, and that we still pray."

The event was broadcast by two local Christian radio stations and also through

streaming audio on the Internet.

Sexton told the Asheville Tribune that he hopes media attention generated by the rally's unexpectedly large turnout will help stir Congress to "protect our liberties from any further deterioration" and enact House Joint Resolution (H.J.R.) 66, a currently inactive piece of legislation to allow for prayer on public property. It can even become an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, he said, "if we stick together and stay after it."

The "We Still Pray" movement is circulating petitions in behalf of H.J.R. 66 and offering to help organize rallies in other cities, Sexton said.

The movement's Internet site is www.westillpray.net; its telephone number is (828) 252-6112.

The need for Christians to take a stand involves far more than a single Supreme Court decision, Sexton told the Asheville Tribune, citing, for example:

- a student in nearby Henderson County who was told by a teacher that she would have to wear her "WE STILL PRAY" T-shirt inside-out for the remainder of her school day due to its religious overtones.

- a case in Catawba County, N.C., in which the American Civil Liberties Union has threatened to sue if a cross in the 75-year-old county seal is not removed. The county commissioners recently voted unanimously to defy the threat.

- a student in an adjacent state who was taken into a principal's office and told not to read the Bible on an hour-long ride on a bus.

Pagans want equal use of rally stadium

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP) — Reynolds High School, scene of an Aug. 17 "We Still Pray" rally, might soon be seeing another religious gathering in Asheville, N.C. This time, a regional pagan group is asking to use the facilities.

The Appalachian Pagan Alliance sent letters to Reynolds principal Tony Baldwin and Buncombe County school superintendent Cliff Dodson on Aug. 18 asking to hold a "We Still Work Magic" rally, stating that because Reynolds High was used by one religious group, it should be made available for all others.

The pagan group has asked for a Sept. 22 date to hold its rally, falling on the autumnal equinox, one of the holidays of the pagan faith.

LABOR DAY THOUGHTS "Ain't No Easy Jobs Except Mine"

Everybody thinks that everybody else has an easy job. Folks who are working outside in the sweltering heat, or freezing cold, see people in the office complex and conclude that their back is not aching and that they are perfectly comfortable. The folks in the office, if they have a window, see people walking around in the wonderful, fresh, clean air and they conclude that those people are healthy, happy, and enjoying life in the freedom of the outdoors. The people who predominantly have to use brain power and are under the stress and strain of creativity and production, long to do manual work to relieve their stress. Meanwhile, the folks doing the backbreaking, muscle-intensive work wish they could just kick back and use their cranial corpuscles to make a living.

Many a man looks at Tiger Woods and his friends and wishes that he could make his living hitting a golf ball. Yet, the guys who are actually on the tour struggle with travel schedules, living out of a suitcase, being away from family, and regardless of the weather, having to go out there and try to make enough money to pay for all of the expenses that are incurred by being on the tour. It's hard work! Whether you are a doctor, lawyer, mechanic, baker, or Indian Chief, every job has its challenges and drawbacks — except mine!

For over 35 years, from time to time, folks have kidded me



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

about having such an easy job as a pastor. They think, "What could be so hard about it? All you have to do is get up two little talks each week, three if you count Wednesday nights, and anybody can stand up and talk for a little while! At least that's the way it appears." I've had folks tell me, "Boy, it sure must be nice to only have to work two or three hours a week!" I learned to just smile and say, "Yes, it's a wonderful job, but you sure have to be smart!"

Of course, the reality is that most jobs are more demanding and not nearly so "cushy" or "manageable" as they may appear. Working in fulltime ministry is glorious, but not easy! There are many other areas of work that provide Kingdom opportunities, and they aren't that easy either. Getting up and going to the classroom can be rewarding, and taxing. Going to the office can be fulfilling and productive, but exhausting. Working in the clinic can help alleviate the pain of others, and bring some pain to yourself. Pouring your life into the farm can leave you with little life at the end of the day.

From a Biblical perspective, let me share with you some thoughts. Let me help your work.

- **Consider work a gift from God.** There are some people who think that the curse that God put on man for sin was work. The curse was not the work, but the struggle of work. Before sin ever came into the world God told Adam to take care of the garden. It was after sin that God said by the sweat of his brow he would toil. God gives us something to do that is helpful to us, to our families, and to others, and he can use us redemptively through work.

- **Find God at your work place.** If you watch for the opportunities and blessings that he affords at work, you will begin to see him guiding you, using you, and touching lives at the workplace. I fully understand that there are some difficult places where Christian folks work, and where the environment is not conducive for spiritual things, that are in

need of the light of Jesus. Let your light shine!

- **Ask God to help you.** Ask him to help you to be where he wants you to be, doing what he wants you to do, and he will guide you. He made you for a purpose. He has a plan and design to use your life lovingly, redemptively, and effectively.

Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day..." and so must we!

Have a great Labor Day!

Secretaries Association sets 2001 meeting



The board of directors of the Mississippi Baptist Secretaries Association met recently in the Baptist Building in Jackson to plan the State Secretaries Conference slated for April 2001. Directors include (back row, from left) Janice Stormont, Area II; Betty Anne Bailey, chaplain; Deanie Hensley, Area VI; Dot Simmons, Area IX; Sandi Komurke, Area IV; Kay McDonnell, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board representative; (front row, from left) Robbie Linley, secretary-treasurer; Sandra Smith, first vice-president; Julia Field, second vice-president; and Vivian Taylor, president. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

JUST FOR THE RECORD



River Bend Church, Monroe Association, held dedication services for a new building on May 21. The new building is a 50-foot by 80-foot facility containing a fellowship hall, seven new Sunday School rooms, and two new offices. Roy McHenry is pastor. Pictured (from left, first row) are Hilda Underwood, Carol Wright; (second row) Carlton Reed, John Owen, Arnold Richardson, and Tommy Gates.

Wayside Church, Scobey, will celebrate its 105th anniversary on Sept. 10. A dinner on the grounds and 1:30 p.m. praise and testimony time will follow morning worship at 11 a.m. Jerry Dale Patterson is pastor.

Mount Zion Church, Smith Association, will dedicate its new 250 seat fellowship hall and education facilities on Sept. 3. The 6,000-sq. ft. building includes a children's wing, kitchen, and restrooms. A covered dish lunch will be provided and open house will be observed at 3 p.m. Keith M. Thompson, pastor, will lead the dedication service beginning at 11 a.m.

Baptist Health Systems' Volunteer Auxiliary recently donated \$500 to purchase toys

and supplies for Baptist's pediatrics department. The much-needed toys, games, books, and videos will help kids feel more at home while in the hospital. Pictured (from left) are Bernard, Baptist's puppet ambassador; Cappe Thompson, Child Life Specialist; Sara Pell, patient, age 6, of Forest; Lindsay of Jackson, volunteer, Child Life Assistant; Dot Terry, Volunteer Auxiliary Board president; and Margaret Armstrong, director of Baptist's Volunteer Services.

Pilgrim's Rest, Batesville, will be celebrating its 115th anniversary on Sept. 3. Sunday School begins at 10 a.m. and preaching service at 11 a.m. Guest speaker will be Guy Reedy of Water Valley. Dinner will follow and Roger and Dana Howell will be singing at 1 p.m.

Ground breaking ceremonies and dinner on the grounds will be held at Trinity Church, Laurel, on Sept. 10. Harrison Weger will be preaching at the 10:30 a.m. worship service. The music will be under the direction of Greg Engell, minister of music. Following the ceremonies and lunch, there be a concert featuring the Gospel Strings of Stringer.

Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, will conduct a financial seminar for adult singles, 7-9 p.m. on Sept. 21. Certified financial planner and author, Ethan Pope, will conduct the seminar. He is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and speaks on a regular basis on the Moody radio network. For more information, call the church at (601) 296-8000.



Bernard, Thompson, Pell, Tillman, Terry, and Armstrong

Members of Homewood Church, Scott Association, recently held a service dedicating their new sanctuary. Pictured (from left) are Randy Harrison; James Shoemaker; Mike Everett, director of missions, Scott County; Doyle Boyles, pastor; Y.T. Gaskin; and John Harrison.

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McLaurin Heights, Pearl, held a neighborhood block party on July 30. Three hundred and fifty-three people attended the gathering on the church's parking lot. Festivities included a free meal and performances by puppets, choirs, ensembles, and the church's new clown ministry. The block party culminated a month of community missions which included the surveying of the 500 homes nearest the church. J. Steve Jackson is pastor.

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